

**Presidential Communications Operations Office  
Presidential News Desk**

**INTERVENTION OF PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE  
AT THE 9<sup>TH</sup> ASEAN-US SUMMIT  
[26 October 2021]**

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Your Majesty, Excellencies, I am pleased to welcome President Joe Biden to his first ASEAN Summit.

For more than 40 years now, ASEAN-US dialogue relations continue to evolve on the basis of our shared strategic interests of regional peace, security and prosperity.

We need to sustain political dialogues, economic engagements and sociocultural ties to further solidify ASEAN-US Strategic Partnership and steer it with purpose to achieve common objectives.

But the regional landscape and seascape are changing rapidly. Amid this challenge, our constant --- as we have always asserted --- should be ASEAN centrality.

The Philippines welcomes the US' assurance that ASEAN is at the center of its Indo-Pacific Strategy. We acknowledge as well the US' commitment to work with ASEAN, especially on maritime security and domain awareness issues.

Arrangements such as the AUKUS trilateral security partnership, however, add a new element to consider within the region.

We take full account of statements that AUKUS will promote peace and stability in our region and maintain support for ASEAN Centrality.

But one thing should be clear for all stakeholders: ASEAN's central role in the evolving regional security architecture must be strengthened. And that this or other arrangements must complement and not complicate our working methods for cooperation.

The [Philippines] reaffirms the strategic importance of the peace and stability of [South] China Sea where freedom of navigation is guaranteed.

Towards this end, all stakeholders must exercise self-restraint to avoid untoward incidents that may further complicate the situation.

Most importantly, we must work together towards the peaceful resolution of disputes, in accordance with international law, particularly the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

I thank the United States for its strong support for the 2016 [Arbitral] Award. This landmark decision serves as a foundation for a rules-based order in the South China Sea.

Your Majesty, Excellencies, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought complicated challenges to all of us. We appreciate the US' generous offer of vaccines for the region, including the Philippines.

To succeed against the pandemic, we need to further strengthen bilateral, regional and international cooperation to ensure universal access to COVID-19 vaccines and medicines.

We look forward to the US' support in the establishment of an ASEAN Public Health Emergency Cooperation System through the United States Agency for International Development's Partnership for Regional Optimization within the Political-Security and [Socio-Cultural] Communities (PROSPECT).

As this pandemic has shown, nations need to be prepared --- individually and collectively --- to effectively address public health emergencies.

As we work towards inclusive recovery, we count on greater cooperation [with] the US on human resources development, including in technical and vocational education and training.

We also welcome the adoption of the ASEAN-US Statement on Digital Development. We hope this [will] advance sound digital policy, human capital development and infrastructure development in the region.

Next year, ASEAN and the United States will mark 45 years of dialogue relations. We look forward to commemorating this milestone by deepening further our strategic partnership for mutual benefit.

Thank you.

**--- END ---**

